

THEME FOR A WORLD-DRAMA.

THE MAIDEN — THE ADOPTED FATHER — THE ADOPTED MOTHER —
THE LOVER.

I would that we had spoke two words together,
For then it had gone right, but now all still, —
This perfect stillness fastens on my heart
Like night, — nothing can come of it.

Why art thou so sad?

O, I do not know.

But thou must know. Whoever knew not living
Some of his inner self; who had no consciousness
Of all his purposes, his doings, — will?
Why this we call the mind, what is it, save
A knowledge of ourselves?

I would it were so.

What were so?

Come — let us be alone awhile; I am weary.

If you would be left, I'll leave you.

Do so, — I'm glad he's gone;
I think of him even when my guardian here,
So gentle and affectionate a man,
Would converse with me of myself. Alas!
And yet why do I say alas! — am I
Not happy in the depth of this my sorrowing,
The only treasure which is simply mine,
That watchful eye is now upon me, ever.
If I look abroad and recognise the forms
Of those familiar mountains, my brothers,
And see the trees soft-waving in the wind
This summer's day; — what then? I cannot, I cannot!

One thing it is to have an outward life,
Another — such as mine.

Why is she then so sad?

Partly it is her nature to be so.

These delicate beings look not o'er
The earth and the rough surface of society,
As commoners. They breathe a finer air,
And their enraptured senses, sudden brought

Into harsh contact with the scaly folds
Of the enormous serpent, Sin, shatter;
As if a glass in which an image dwelt
Of an all-perfect seeming were rudely
On a bitter stone employed, smiting it
Into a million fragments. — She is of this breed,
This narrow suffrage in a world of dross
Of gold thrice molten, and it seems to me
That, with a strange peculiar care of love,
We should encompass her with lovely thoughts,
Forms breathing Italy in every bend,
Scarce enough products of our northern vale.

I feel that although she is not our child,
We do regard her with a parent's love

But O, our love is a poor mockery
Of what that love had been. We do not live,
As marrow in the bone, within her life,
As parents had. Nature has ministered to these,
In such full kind; they are the double worlds,
As man, if truly wise, a twice-told tale,
First for himself, and then for Nature.

I am all aware that with what stress of mind
I strive to paint a parent's love for her
In my imagination, will drop short
O' the mark; I cannot sling the stone, as one
Who from his hand the whirling pebble sent
To dive into another's life.

Let us not despair!

This world is much too wide for that;
I pity him, the poor despairing man,
Who walks the teeming earth, — a solitude;
Who groans his soul away, as if it were
The conduit pipe of a dull city, or
The dreadful hum of oiled machinery,
Which from the doors, where starveling weavers ply
Their horrid toil, down to the sunset hour
Floats out upon the tune of all this visible love,
A clanging echo of the miser's shrieks.
Our very freedom is to be awake,
Alive to inspiration from the whole
Of a fair universe.

I feel myself, — I do not see myself;
But my particular nature masters me,
Even here, among these waving spirits
Who haunt the reedy banks of this calm river,
Lofty genial presences who fill their place,
Nor will displace a thought their long year lives,
I defy all but this, and this I must

Obey, — I cannot this defy. This is
 The oracular parent of the child,
 Whose simple look can wind him into tasks
 Hateful and hated. — I did not wish
 To love; I said, — here stands a man whose soul
 The imprisoning forms of things shall master,
 Not without a strife convulsed as death;
 I stand upon an adamantine basis
 Never to rock; I triumphed over much;
 The whimperings of the youth I changed to words;
 Nor scoffs, nor jeers, nor place, nor poverty
 Gained footing in the scale of my design.
 This girl came to me on a summer's day,
 The day of my o'ermastery, which passes
 From my mind but with my life. Up she rose
 As the first revelation to the Poet's soul
 Of his dear art, thenceforth to him his spring;
 A radiance circled her with grace, as I
 Have seen about the fronts of Raphael's
 Time-defying saints, — a ring of glory,
 Waxing immeasurably potent
 In its symbolical form; her motion
 Flung me to the ground in prayer, I hardly
 Daring to translate my eyes again to hers,
 Lest another glance would represent a thin
 And shadowy lustre fading fast away.
 At length, with breath suspended, looked again,
 And there in very form she was. I felt
 I know not what. I will not venture on a chance
 That I may hit the sense of my expression,
 Yet I was expressed; a copious sense
 Of knowledge that my former mind of beauty
 Was inconceivably blind, rushed through me;
 A decided view of perfect loveliness,
 Bore information of celestial heights,
 At whose first inch I had thus far stood idle
 Into the Ideal in my mind; there fixed
 The simple surface of her body; the hair
 Of tender brown, not negligent disposed,
 The unrivalled tracing through her dress
 Of a prodigious nature; her life
 Glowed out in the embalming whiteness of her neck;
 All that she is in fact came to me then,
 And in me now finds ready utterance.